

18th CONGRESS, }  
1st Session. }

[ 87 ]

# MEMORIAL

OF THE

**Merchants, Ship Owners, and Mechanics,**

OF

**PORTSMOUTH,**

IN

*The State of New Hampshire.*

---

FEBRUARY 24, 1824.

Read, and referred to the committee of the whole House to which is committed the bill to amend the several acts for imposing duties on Imports.

---

WASHINGTON :

PRINTED BY GALES & SEATON.

1824.



## MEMORIAL.

*To the Honorable the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States in Congress assembled,*

The memorial of the merchants, ship owners, and mechanics, of  
Portsmouth, in the state of New Hampshire,

RESPECTFULLY REPRESENTS:

That your memorialists are the inhabitants of a town, whose prosperity, and even existence, depends on commerce, and more particularly on those branches of it which are connected with ship building and the carrying trade. The bulk of our capital is invested in navigation, and the principal part of our active and efficient population is composed of merchants, ship owners, mariners, ship carpenters, blacksmiths, coppersmiths, rope makers, sail makers, mast and block makers, boat builders, plumbers, caulkers, riggers, ship painters, and various other artificers and manufacturers; whose sole dependence for the subsistence of themselves and families, is on commerce and navigation. It is, therefore, with much apprehension and alarm, that they have seen laid before Congress, a bill recommending many and great alterations in the present tariff, and which, under the mask of regulating commerce, would tend nearly to destroy it, and compel your memorialists to seek new employment in arts which they have yet to learn, and which, in their opinion, are neither more healthy, more honorable, more profitable, (unless protected by bounties,) or more beneficial to the community, than those in which they are now engaged. It appears to them self-evident, that the enactment of this bill would tend very much to diminish, and ultimately to destroy, the revenue arising from commerce, and that, with their reduced ability, they must soon, in common with the agricultural class of the community, submit to direct taxation for the support of Government. It would not become them, nor the nature of this communication, to recapitulate the arguments which fully demonstrate the fact, that the system proposed by this bill, would be no less injurious to the agricultural, than to the mercantile interest; while they have not heard it even pretended, that any other advantages are to result from this measure, than to prop up and foster, by excessive bounties, certain favored branches of manufactures, while all those branches connected with commerce, must, by its operation, be broken down.

Your memorialists could proceed to point out many items of the bill which would be wholly nugatory, or could be enforced only by

the most oppressive means; they will advert, however, only to one article, in which, as it so immediately concerns themselves, they hope they may be indulged.

The bill proposes a duty of three cents per pound on chain cables, and parts thereof, and no drawback on the exportation. These cables are a recent improvement in the equipment of ships, which experience has proved to be of so great utility and economy, that every ship should be provided with at least one of them. For a ship of 300 to 350 tons, the ordinary size employed in the European and carrying trade, it requires a cable of 90 fathoms in length, which, with the necessary apparatus, is found to weigh 9238 pounds, and, at the proposed rate of duty of three cents per pound, would pay \$277 14 cents impost. This being equal to the full value of the best hempen cable, of the same length and strength, would amount to a total prohibition of this article, and compel the ship owner, either to go without one, or to provide it in a foreign port; for, taking into view the high price of manufacturing labor in the United States, and that the raw material from which this article is manufactured, is also, by the same bill, taxed at one cent per pound duty; the manufacture of chain cables in the United States could not be attempted. If, however, the duty should be exacted on this article obtained abroad for the use of the ship which obtained it, such a regulation could have no other effect, than to prohibit the use of these cables to American ships, which would deprive them of one of the greatest modern improvements in their equipment. A proposition of such a nature, they confidently trust, could not obtain a moment's consideration of Congress. This simple statement serves to illustrate the fact, that excessive duties will always be evaded, and that the revenue will thereby sustain the loss of that moderate duty which would be paid with cheerfulness, while the consequent increased consumption would augment the aggregate amount.

Your memorialists further represent, that the duties reported by the bill, on the various articles usually imported for the construction and equipment of such a ship as has before been described, is found, by a calculation on the quantity of these articles actually used in the building and equipment of ships of this size, without armament, to amount to fourteen hundred and fifty dollars, or, in other words, to about five dollars per ton on every ton of shipping manufactured in the United States, of which, at least one half the cost is mechanical labor, and is equivalent to almost thirty days labor for every ton of such shipping *manufactured*, to say nothing of the great amount of labor which is constantly required for sailing and keeping the same in repair. Should this great tax be imposed on the *machinery* of their trade, at the same time that the employment of this machinery would be, to a great extent, reduced, by the other operations of the proposed tariff, and even if some relief be not afforded on the present rate of duty, the scale must soon preponderate in favor of the employment of foreign ships, now almost universally admitted into the ports of the United States on the same terms with our own; and, at the reduced

price at which foreign ships could be constructed, would soon supplant our own ships, even in the valuable carrying trade of the productions of our own country, which will, if this bill should become a law, pass into the hands of our powerful commercial rivals. The perseverance with which certain manufacturers urge upon Congress a further increase of bounties in their favor, can be viewed by your memorialists in no other light, than a war, *not even disguised*, of the manufacturing class upon the agricultural and commercial classes, who, as they humbly conceive, are not less entitled to the protection and support of Government, than the manufacturers themselves. Your memorialists hold it to be a settled maxim, that no country is so dependant, as that which is exclusively, or even extensively, a manufacturing country, and which, consequently, depends on the friendship or caprice of other nations, not only for the purchase of its wares, but very frequently, also, for the supply of its daily bread.



